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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 002863

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER TU IZ
SUBJECT: CODEL SHAYS TALKS PKK, KURDISH ISSUE, IRAQ, AND
U.S.-TURKISH COOPERATION IN ANKARA

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Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Rep. Christopher Shays met with MFA Under
Secretary Apakan, Turkish General Staff (TGS) Plans and

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Operations Chief Maj. Gen. Kocak, and a group of current and
former parliamentarians representing southeastern Turkey in
Ankara on November 26 and 27, the first two days of a
four-day visit to Turkey. Shays' visit was focused on
Turkey's struggle with the terrorist Kurdistan Workers' Party
(PKK) and the broader Kurdish issue in Turkey. Those with
whom Shays spoke expressed appreciation for U.S. cooperation
in combating PKK terrorism, and asked for continued USG
involvement. END SUMMARY

Shays Discusses Iraq, PKK at MFA

¶2. (C) Apakan said that Turkey supports PM Maliki and Iraq's
unity and territorial integrity. Despite tensions over PKK
in northern Iraq, the GOT is doing all it can to contribute
to Iraq's success, as illustrated by the Iraq Expanded
Neighbors ministerial it hosted in Istanbul. The bilateral
counter-terrorism cooperation agreement signed in September
is important, even without agreement on hot pursuit. If
security issues can be resolved, Turkey can focus more on
developing economic ties with Iraq, including the north,
where over 200 Turkish companies now do business.

¶3. (C) Apakan expressed concern about PKK camps just across
the Iraqi border. He said the U.S. is doing a great deal to
assist Turkey against the PKK, and he highlighted the results
of PM Erdogan's November 5 meeting with POTUS. Although
Turkey does not meet or work directly with Kurdish Regional
Government (KRG) authorities, Turkish officials meet
indirectly via individuals associated with KRG leadership.
Apakan said Iraqi Kurds have been "more responsible" in their
support of a unified Iraq in recent months.

¶4. (C) Shays expressed hope that Turkish economic engagement
in Iraq will increase and encouraged the involvement of
Turkish companies in Iraq's petroleum sector. Ambassador
pointed to the importance of ongoing US-TU-IZ trilateral
discussions on Iraqi gas that could contribute to the success
of the Nabucco pipeline.

Bilateral Counter-Terrorism Cooperation the Focus at TGS

¶5. (C) Rep. Shays told Maj Gen Kocak that he had been to Iraq
frequently, understood Turkish concerns regarding PKK

terrorism, and wanted to ensure the U.S. is being helpful as discussed by President Bush and PM Erdogan. The U.S. is pressing Iraqi Kurdish leaders to take action. Turkey must decide what actions are in its best interest, but should be aware of the possible consequences on regional stability. Shays warned that the PKK seeks to get Turkish forces bogged down in Iraq.

¶6. (C) Kocak expressed appreciation for U.S support. He briefed Shays on PKK criminal activity in Europe and Turkish dissatisfaction with Europe's weak response. The PKK now uses advanced improvised explosive devices; while the two organizations apparently have no organic link, the PKK is learning from al Qaida's experience, he asserted. Kocak expressed concern over the diversion to Turkey of small arms provided to Iraqi Security Forces. The U.S. and others are "over-arming" the ISF. Heavy weapons could end up in the hands of the Iraqi Kurds and PKK terrorists. Kocak also described the work underway to implement PKK undertakings coming out of the President's meeting with PM Erdogan and TGS views regarding it.

Kurdish Politicians on Dialogue and Ending Violence

¶7. (C) Ethnic Kurdish parliamentary figures shared the common view that PKK terrorism cannot be stopped through military means alone. Serafettin Elci, founding chairman of the Participatory Democracy Party, thanked the U.S. for its role in easing tensions between Turkey and Iraq and lessening pressure for a cross border operation (CBO). Elci emphasized Kurds' opposition to violence and unease about the PKK, but said the organization is the consequence of, not the reason for, Turkey's Kurdish problem. Kurds want to use the Kurdish language in autonomous areas within Turkey; when that happens, the armed struggle of the PKK will end because there will be no support for it.

¶8. (C) Ihsan Arslan, AKP MP for Diyarbakir, agreed with

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Elci's assessment, but noted that AKP has taken a major step facilitating discussion of Kurdish concerns in the political arena. AKP policy to maintain close ties with the U.S., the EU, and regional states will help convince the Turkish public of the need to pursue common sense policies.

¶9. (C) Sertac Bucak, chairman of the Rights and Freedoms Party, reiterated opposition to violence and to a CBO. He blamed the crisis atmosphere on the military and other segments of Turkish society that oppose ties to Iraq and want to keep tensions high.

¶10. (C) Mesut Deger, former Republican People's Party MP for Diyarbakir, credited AKP for success in reaching out to ethnic Kurds and pushing for democracy and the rule of law. The key is to "politicize the PKK" by offering a general pardon for rank and file who have not committed violence. This will sideline hardliners and support those Kurdish nationalists who oppose the use of violence. Many in Turkey believe the U.S. can help bring a solution to the nation's Kurdish problem, a sentiment he shares.

¶11. (C) Hasim Hasimi, former Welfare Party, Felicity Party and Motherland Party MP for Diyarbakir, said the U.S. was helpful in defusing tensions between Turkey and Iraqi Kurds. By establishing dialogue with KRG officials, Turkey would help to solve its broader Kurdish problem as well. He expressed his support for the DTP's presence in parliament but lamented its MPs' inability to display political independence from PKK leadership. He opposed the party's closure.

¶12. (U) CODEL Shays did not clear this message.

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